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ABSTRACT

A human society that aspires to more than survival must search continuously for new knowledge; we are all the beneficiaries of the scholar's insatiable desire to know. Graduate study must be nurtured, and cannot ever be the sole preoccupation of academe. Today the crucial balance of things and humans is threatened by the erosion of support for and interest in graduate study of the humanities. The professions, such as medicine, are turning more and more to the humanities as part of professional study, seeking three things the humanities can uniquely contribute to human endeavor: (1) to serve as preferred vehicles for teaching the liberal arts; (2) to provide sources of knowledge not susceptible to scientific method; and (3) to enrich the lives of humans as humans. It is important to reassert these seemingly obvious uses of the humanities, even for the humanists. The liberal arts are indispensable to the survival of democratic societies, which survive on the strength of their citizens who possess a critical intelligence. As a result of changes external and internal to the humanities, humanists have retreated too swiftly before the popularity and successes of the sciences and the professions. Scholarship and research do not exhaust the value of the humanities to society, and it is the university's responsibility to prepare humanists who can cultivate the closer engagement of the humanities with practical affairs. (MSE)

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An Occasional Paper

GRADUATE EDUCATION IN THE HUMANITIES: THE NEED FOR REAFFIRMATION, CONNECTION, AND JUSTIFICATION

Edmund D. Pellegrino

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FOREWORD

"The humanities can irrigate deserts."

That felicitous phrase is Edwin Delattre's, heading an article by him that appeared in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* on October 11, 1977. In his paper Mr. Delattre defended the view that study in the humanities encourages people to become both highly competent in specific knowledge, and to open their minds to subtle truths and subliminal meanings and unsuspected connections between things. The humanities, he argued, are not separated from everyday life; indeed, they are an indispensable part of it.

Yet it is on just that point that graduate study in the humanities has received some undeservedly negative attention in recent years. The humanities may help to make a richer life, critics say, but you cannot make a living with them.

We in higher education have had to face the demographic realities: there are indeed fewer opportunities of the traditional kind for holders of the doctorate than there have been for a generation. Faculty openings for new Ph.D.s are limited, much more so in the humanities than in some other areas. This situation is likely to persist, at least for the short term.

That familiar, frequently repeated fact does not mean that no opportunities at all exist for holders of a humanities doctorate. On the contrary, there is a world of work to be done. There is great need for humanists both to interpret and complement the highly sophisticated developments in science and technology. Society is wanting for guidance in value and moral judgments, holistic assessments of patterns of life, and the like. The challenge is not an alleged "surplus of Ph.D.s," which is like saying that there are too many educated people. The challenge is bringing to bear the expertise of these highly educated men and women on our needs and opportunities.

Every year thousands of new recipients of the Ph.D. take jobs in business, government, and other non-academic settings. Frequently their work requires those abilities that they developed in graduate school. As supervisors, directors and managers, they teach. Making profits or public policy or more humane institutions they find to be collegial endeavor. To paraphrase Joseph Duffey, former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, there is no endeavor whose history and literature lie outside the interest of the humanities.

Medicine was once considered one of the liberal arts, as physician Edmund D. Pellegrino points out in this paper. During the past century of technological advances, it has tended towards specialization, its practitioners focusing upon specific parts of the ana-

tomy or aspects of physiology. Recently, however, medicine has begun repossessing some of its historical and original concern: a comprehensive view of the sick person, a "whole" person with a unique history. Dr. Pellegrino credits the introduction of humanistic studies into the medical school curriculum with giving impetus to this significant change, and he foresees gains to be had from making them a part of the education of other professional people.

I am happy to note that this option for humanist scholars continues to be a strong undercurrent in all that is written about graduate education. We are on the threshold of another age of innovation. Some part of it will require the most rigorous and acute technical expertise. But the harder part may have to come from the humanists, with their capacity for eclectic, critical thinking and their broad scope of knowledge.

Dr. Pellegrino's eloquent, forceful statement makes an irrefutable case for the national interest in preserving and strengthening graduate education in the humanities.

MICHAEL J. PELCZAR, Jr.
President
The Council of Graduate Schools in
the United States

A human society that aspires to more than survival must search continuously for new knowledge. If that search is inhibited or imbalanced society itself is imperilled and its shape distorted. We are all the beneficiaries of the scholar's insatiable desire to know. That is why graduate study, whose function it is to educate the seekers of knowledge, must be nurtured and why it cannot ever be the preoccupation solely of Academia.

A society that aspires to be humane as well as human must balance its knowledge of things and techniques with its knowledge of humans and humanity. Maintaining that balance is a major intellectual challenge for the modern university. To exalt one kind of knowledge above the others is to court inhumanism.

Today that crucial balance is seriously threatened by the erosion of support for, and interest in, the graduate study of the humanities. The more our contemporary world depends upon professionals and technicians the more it needs those who can speak for what makes a society humane.

The present and coming crisis in graduate education in the humanities has been well and amply documented. So, too, are its putative causes — the decline in the college age population, rising costs, losses of federal support for research and scholarships, the need to seek non-academic employment, and the national bias for the practical and immediate results that science and technology can bestow.[1-4] The reasonable response for universities has been articulated very well, particularly by President William Bowen of Princeton — planned reduction in size and number of graduate programs, selective excellence, improvement in the quality of students by concentrating what resources are available for student support and research.[5] We are justified in speaking of a critical situation — one which needs no further documentation in this essay.

Nor is there need to paraphrase the "how to" advice about non-academic jobs, how to interview for them, and how rewarding they can be.[6-9] The humanities must be supported not because they provide jobs for Ph.D.'s but because they are indispensable to a civilized, humane, and advanced society. Properly construed and properly taught, they safeguard a society against those distortions of the truth, morality, and aesthetics so easily justified by the exigencies of politics, economics, and technical flamboyance.

The Report of the Commission on the Humanities puts it bluntly: "Education must reaffirm the value of the humanities. The greatest challenge for the Humanities is not to increase enrollments or support but to demonstrate their contributions to education and public life."[10] And then a little later: "The humanities, science, and technology need to be substantially connected."[11] These are the specific challenges I would like to address.

Let me concentrate then on what the humanities can contribute to science, technology, and public life — on the connections, so to speak, between humanistic study and contemporary life. If I start with what appears to be an instrumentalist approach, I shall return to the intrinsic worth of the humanities.

How can the "connections" be established? What are the obstacles? What is the role of the university in making those connections?

To examine these questions I will draw from an exotic source — my two decades of personal experience teaching ethics, human values, and the humanities in medical schools,[12] and a decade as Director of the Institute on Human Values in Medicine dedicated to the establishment of humanistic teaching on medical campuses.[13]

Given the dominant perceptions of medicine, you are entitled to a certain skepticism about what a medical man might contribute to a matter so much at the heart of the academic enterprise. What could be less congruent with the humanities than the specialized, instrumental bias of modern medicine.

My intrusion may seem less rash if I remind you that there is a more ancient and integral view of medicine than the prevalent one. On that view, medicine is not quite in Philistia but situated somewhere between the sciences and the humanities. Medicine, we must not forget, focuses — like the humanities — on human experiences, on living, creating, suffering, enjoying, and dying. Healing, like painting, writing, composing, or philosophizing, must penetrate the meanings of those experiences, their uniqueness and their commonality. Perhaps that is why Varro even included medicine among the liberal arts.[14]

In the last decade or so we have witnessed a remarkable example of the ways medicine and the humanities can connect with each other. The whole remarkable growth of the field of bioethics is testimony to the fact that questions of value, ends and purpose are at the heart of every important medical decision and that medicine *qua* medicine does not possess the means for making ethical judgments. Indeed, this growth of teaching and research not only in medical ethics but in the humanities in medicine provides a paradigm of the "connections" the Report of the Commission on the Humanities may be seeking.

Today almost all of the 126 medical schools in the nation teach medical ethics in some form and some 80 schools teach one of the Humanities in addition.[15] This is a contrast with the situation less than two decades ago.[16] The same phenomenon is becoming apparent in schools of nursing, business, and engineering.

This new engagement of the humanities with contemporary life is especially significant in a society of technicians and professionals

who make so many of the momentous decisions that shape our individual and social lives. The professions are flourishing, respected and well supported, yet they turn to the humanities — why?

I believe it is because they comprehend as never before that a knowledge of fact and technique is unequal to the analysis and resolution of the value dimension that so heavily colors their decisions. New knowledge challenges our traditional belief systems, and even our concept of what human existence is, and, what it should be. It is in the wise use of their new knowledge that the professions are lacking. What the conscientious professional seeks is just those elements that will raise his enterprises from a merely instrumental to a genuinely human level.

What they seek are, I believe, those three things the humanities, properly pursued, can uniquely contribute to all human endeavor: 1) to serve as the preferred vehicles for teaching the liberal arts, 2) to provide sources of knowledge not susceptible to the methods of science, and 3) to enrich the lives of humans as humans.

Obvious as these three things may be it is becoming increasingly important to reassert them even for humanists. Too many of them, I fear, have lost their faith in the intrinsic worth of the humanities. They have come to see them only as specialized branches of human knowledge. The humanists, it seems, have defected from their ancient task of being the teachers of us all.

A. Vehicles for the Liberal Arts

The first contribution the humanities can make to education, and to the professions, is as the preferred vehicles for inculcation of the liberal arts. These arts are not synonymous with the content of the humanities. They are, rather, those attitudes that enable the mind to be free to form its own opinions, make its own decisions, to examine any field of inquiry and be free of the potential tyranny of other men's opinions. These are, as Gerald Else, has termed them, the *Arts of the Word* — the capacity to think critically and dialectically, to read and comprehend language, to speak, and to judge in moral and aesthetic matters.[17] Philosophy, literature, language, and history — the classical humanistic disciplines — are built on, and out of, these arts and, when properly taught, they are the most effective vehicles for teaching them.

The liberal arts are the traditional working tools of every educated person. We forget too easily that they are also essential in the daily work of every profession. In medicine, for example, the arts of the word are built intimately into the clinical arts.[18] The major part of the physician's work is not, as so commonly supposed, an exercise primarily in science. There is, to be sure, science and actuarial logic in medical decision-making. But the more crucial aspects of diag-

nosis and therapeutics center on prudent choices in the face of considerable uncertainty. A differential diagnosis, or deciding among alternative treatments are exercises in dialectics, modal logic, and ethics. History taking is the development of a narrative — a history and a biography of *this* patient. The patient-physician interaction is an exercise in human communication requiring a deep perception of the meaning of words, language, and culture.

All the professions — when they come to the point of deciding what *ought* to be done, communicating that decision, obtaining consent for it and resolving conflicts in value systems must make use of the liberal arts. Otherwise, their decisions will be neither morally nor intellectually sustainable. Without the liberal arts, the professional is a technician applying preordained formulae but unable to make those prudent modulations of rules and standards that distinguish all the higher levels of human activity.

B. The Special Content of the Humanities

In addition to being vehicles for teaching the liberal arts, each humanistic discipline possesses a special kind of knowledge that is not susceptible to the methods of the sciences. The specific content of the humanities antedates modern science and in some ways opposes as well as complements it.

The humanities deal with the imaginative, dramatic, and artistic elements of human life, with the structures' use, and meanings of language and symbol, with the history and form of men's ideas about themselves and the world. The humanities seek out the idiosyncratic particulars and the uniqueness in individual human experiences rather than general laws as science does. The humanities evoke experiences through the medium of language, paint, stone and marble or sound. They struggle with those very things science does not touch — the mysteries of living, dying, suffering, and joy — with their meanings and how they may be communicated from one person to another. The prodigious advances of science have not eradicated mystery; wisdom is as rare a commodity now as it always has been; creativity is as inexplicable as ever. The humanities wrestle in every generation with the same problems — who we are, why we are, and with the inextinguishable human cry for meaning.

Science deals with new problems. Its content is progressive and cumulative. Though paradigms may change, there are still some things no longer credible. The humanities, instead, ponder the same questions, often posed in the same way century after century. They exasperate those who seek the solace of certitude and formulae because they always throw us back upon ourselves. They ask us to make our own assessments, and make us realize that we

cannot be fully human by merely parroting other men's opinions. They create anxieties precisely because they challenge us to be persons.

Medicine is turning today to the humanities because it needs this special kind of knowledge. Being ill and being healed are complex, not wholly comprehensible phenomena, involving the person as much as his organs and tissues. The ill person is an historical entity whose experience is not wholly penetrable by even the most dedicated healer. To heal another person we must understand how illness wounds his or her humanity, what values are at stake, what this illness means and how *this* illness expresses the whole life of *this* patient. The physician who does not understand his own humanity can hardly heal another's.

This is why the humanities are now taught in many medical schools even though they were studied in college. Literature has proven an effective way to teach empathy for the sick, suffering and dying. Through the creative words of George Eliot, Tolstoi, Chekhov, Camus, or Thomas Mann, the experience of being ill, being a doctor, or dying can be powerfully evoked and vicariously felt.[19]

Philosophy teaches the arts of logic and dialectic but also tells us what men have thought about human nature, truth, goodness, right and wrong. It challenges the physician to know his own values and to give a reasonable account of them before daring to undertake the delicate task of deciding with another person what is "good" for that person. The skills of ethics are as essential to being a competent physician as those of the basic and clinical sciences.

History traces where we have been as a species and what constraints the human past puts on each of us. It creates that sense of continuity without which individuals and societies lose their bearings. It teaches how to validate a temporal account of human events which is what the patient's own history turns out to be. In a sense the physician has an opportunity rarely afforded the historian — he is almost always in direct contact with his primary source — the patient. Yet how many times do physicians, like historians, ignore the source in favor of a plethora of secondary and tertiary sources?

All the things the humanities teach, write, and think about, have some relevance for the work of medicine and parenthetically of all the professions. That is why they are essential to good education in the first place. The need for reenforcement in medical school of what they teach is strong evidence of the pertinence of the content as well as the method of the humanities.

C. Humanities, the Enrichment of Human Life

The practical uses of the method and content of the humanities must not overshadow their intrinsic worth which is to enrich and enhance the whole experience of human living. This value of humanistic learning and study transcends even their most practical applications because in the very best sense they can make us more humane and thus better human beings.

To cultivate literature, philosophy, history, painting, or music is to add dimensions of delectation to living unattainable in any other way. These pursuits delight us because they correspond most closely with those capacities that most clearly distinguish us as human — the capabilities to recognize and experience truth, beauty, and virtue. They stretch our capacity to enjoy what other men have created, or what we may create ourselves to communicate something of our inner lived world to our fellows.

Medical men have always turned to the humanities and the arts to counter the aridity of too zealous a dedication to the technical demands of their daily work. Hours spent in the pursuit of humanistic studies refresh and restore. They reawaken sensitivities obtunded by the demands of time, routine and detail that beset the conscientious practitioner. The number of physicians who write, paint, play an instrument or read literature attests to the restorative powers of the humanities. Some become so entranced that they abandon medicine all together and become "medical truants."[20] Others can even continue as active practitioners and lead a double life as creative artists.[21]

It must be apparent by now that I believe that one cannot be a genuinely competent physician without imbibing the three things that uniquely the humanities have to give — their method, their content and their power to enrich and restore the spirit. Indeed, I would say further that professional failure is as much a result of defects in humanistic education as it is in technical skill or information.

D. Society, Democracy and the Humanities

We have in the recent turn of medicine to the humanities a working model of those vital connections between the humanities, science and technology the Report of the Commission on the Humanities is seeking. That is why I have taken so lengthy a detour through the engagement of medicine and the humanities. What that engagement demonstrates has a wider significance for all of the professions and for society itself.

Surely, it must be apparent that what medicine is seeking from the humanities is precisely what the other professions and society

itself must seek from them. With perhaps less urgency or moral imperativeness, every profession faces ethical and value choices. That realization probably explains the great interest now in the teaching of ethics in the undergraduate curriculum, in law schools, and in the preparation of policymakers.[22-24] In these fields, as in medicine, ethics is the first point of engagement since the moral dilemmas of modern life are so pressing, ubiquitous and puzzling.

But it will become apparent in these fields, as it has in medicine, that the primary humanistic disciplines and the discipline of the liberal arts are really what is missing. That realization even now is evident in the general disquiet with the equality of liberal education. The current interest in improving the teaching of the liberal arts is confused, vague and insecure. But one thing is certain: that without the support of graduate education in the humanities the requisite number of teachers and scholars will not be at hand in the next century.

The liberal arts are indispensable to the survival of democratic societies. The intellectual skills they embody are our major protection against the dominance of the whole of our complex society by its experts. We are all limited by the perimeter of our own expertise, yet we are all citizens with an equal stake in the judgments of those experts. Like it or not, we must make judgments outside our own field or settle for a technocracy which surrenders all political and social decisions to experts.

Democratic societies survive on the strength of that number of their citizens who possess a critical intelligence. I refer to the capacity to separate fact from value in public decisions and to make discriminating judgements in the face of uncertainty and disagreement among experts. In sum, democracy operates only when the largest possible proportion of its citizens possess the skills that will keep their minds free — the skills of the liberal arts.

In a similar way the content of the humanities assures a more humane and civilized social life. The more people who understand the full range of human experience, who can savor works of the imagination and creativity and who comprehend the spectrum of human cultures, the more can society raise itself above the drive for survival. The better persons understand their own humanity, the better they see the connections between their lives and those of their fellows. The more too will they seek humane solutions to the perennial dilemmas of living in human societies.

The use of humanistic knowledge to elevate the experience of living has long been a tradition in our culture. Admittedly, it has not always produced truly humane societies, or even humane persons among its devotees. What has been lacking is the appreciation that mere exposure or even their power to enrich must be connected

with their moral use. That is why ethics is so crucially centered between the humanities and human behavior, and also why the present interest in ethics is so encouraging. It is the "connection" that makes the other connections of which I am speaking possible and effective.

E. Obstacles, and the University's Role

If these contributions of the humanities to education and society are as obvious as I hold them to be why must the case be made again? Why does the Commission urge that their value must be "reaffirmed"? What are the obstacles that obscure the connections between the humanities and the ordinary affairs of daily life, science and technology?

Some of the problem arises in social and cultural transformations. Since the industrial revolution, we have exalted efficiency, productivity and practicality.[25] The cultivation of the intellect or its aesthetic and moral sensitivities came to be regarded as "elitist." This attitude is reenforced by the demands for universal education, usually with preparation for a job as its aim. Further, the impressive power of science and technology have so overshadowed the humanities as to take them out of contact with "practical" affairs.

Even more significant than external transformations the humanities have undergone are the internal. Following the model of the Ph.D. as conceived in the 19th century German universities, the humanities have become professionalized and specialized fields of study. The resulting expansion of detailed knowledge has been impressive. But, unfortunately, scholarship and liberal education are not synonymous. Too many humanists have concentrated on the content of the humanities without imbibing their method or their power to enrich human life.

As a result many who are professional humanists have lost faith in the humanities or in their own capacity to communicate the things I have outlined here. Many cannot do so because they have not had a liberal education. Rather, they were taught by specialists whose major concern was the recruitment of talent.

As a result humanists have retreated too swiftly before the popularity and successes of the sciences and the professions. They forget that the educated mind need not be overwhelmed by an abundance of fact, that all statements are claims that can be dissected by the rules of logic and that value questions are imbedded in every decision to act. Indeed, it is the very abundance of factual information that creates the need to order those facts, sift their meanings and choose among the alternatives they offer. We must discriminate between facts that shall influence us and those that we may ignore.

The most difficult discussion to initiate and sustain on a university campus is one that deals with an issue transcending specialist boundaries. Yet these are the most significant issues for humankind. As academicians we lapse into apodictic pronouncement, condescension or retreat. Rarely do we follow the canons of dialectical discourse and engage the issues. As a result we lose the chance to use our special knowledge or to learn what others know about the question.

None of this is to deplore specialism, rigorous scholarship or elegant attention to detail. I wish only to underscore what happens if we forget that the content of the humanities is only one of these contributions they make to all human affairs.

One of the healthier things about the engagement of medicine and the humanities is the opportunity for intellectual discourse between humanists and medical people. As physicians and humanists become intellectually acculturated to each other they become more confident of their own contributions and respectful of what they can bring to each other. Humanists who eschew contact with the professional world will miss a source of inspiration for their own scholarly work. This is one of the unexpected benefits experienced by the humanists who have taught in medical schools. It emphasizes the two-way nature of the connections between medicine and humanist study.

What do all of these transformations mean for the universities who are charged with the graduate education of future scholars and teachers in the humanities?

It means, for one thing, that scholarship is not enough if the humanities are to teach all they have to offer. It does not mean that scholarship is depreciated. New knowledge comes only from concentrated effort on sharply defined problems. But greater emphasis must be placed on the liberal education of future humanists and this cannot be confined to the undergraduate years. Involvement of graduate students in university-wide seminars, task forces, or committees on crucial issues should be formalized and encouraged. It is not necessary to develop "interdisciplinary" or "interdepartmental" doctoral programs. They can be dismal failures unless they result from a mutuality of intellectual interests. These cannot be structured artificially. That is why so many ambitious interdisciplinary programs fail.

Paradoxically, the most important thing a university can do for its graduate program in the humanities is to reestablish the credibility of its liberal arts teaching. The benefits for graduate students will be several; first, they will be provided the tools of the intellect that make for a genuine liberal education; then, they will see better how their narrow field of scholarship connects with other branches of

knowledge; third, they will be better prepared to teach the humanities as vehicles for the liberal arts and not solely as specialties.

With a more authentic liberal education, graduate students in the humanities will more readily see the "added value" of their graduate study and more confidently and more convincingly argue its value. Perhaps some even think it honorable to commit their lives to teaching the humanities as vehicles for the liberal arts for undergraduates and even in high schools. After all, most Ph.D.'s give up research after completing their theses and few make it their consuming interest.

What secondary education needs more than anything else is teachers who are educated — who know and love a subject, want to communicate it and can do so with conviction. If a substantial number of graduates in the humanities were to undertake this kind of teaching, society would be the beneficiary. More policy makers would comprehend how essential are the contributions and connections of the humanities to the whole of humane existence.

This would also provide an alternative job market — one not too far removed from the hope of many graduate students that they might be able to teach their subject. If the university is not the only place of employment for Ph.D.'s, as we are being forced to admit, why not the high school?

I have deliberately avoided repeating the practical advice being widely suggested to meet the crisis of graduate education in the humanities — smaller numbers, higher quality, alternate job opportunities, and the "added value" of graduate study. These will assure the production of the researchers and scholars we need to add continuously to our knowledge. Since the number of true scholars has always been small, present measure may prove adequate but may also result in a higher quality of research.

Scholarship and research do not exhaust the value of the humanities to society. And it is the responsibility of the university to prepare humanists who can cultivate the closer engagement of the humanities with practical affairs — not to ensure their own survival but because all human activity can be made more humane thereby.

Some of what we are learning from the engagements of medicine and the humanities is applicable to the rest of professional, public and private life. If the humanities are to be true to their pristine function they cannot be confined solely to the universities. I believe this is, in part, what the report of the Commission on the Humanities is pointing toward, and what it means when it states that "Educators must reaffirm the values of the humanities."

The Report of the Commission on the Humanities is properly enough directed to educators. It is they who must "reaffirm" the values of the humanities and establish the "connections" between

them and the whole of American life. Some part of the decline in support is attributable to a failure thus far to meet this challenge as forthrightly, unequivocally and unapologetically as possible. If that challenge can be met the "crisis" may eventually result in a strengthening of graduate education in the humanities.

We have in the engagement of medicine and the humanities a concrete example of how the Commission's challenge can be met successfully. There are lessons still to be learned but enough is already certain to warrant wider application of this model by universities. It is this warrant also that justifies my presumption as a medical man to speak to you of graduate education in the humanities.

** ** **

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naivete and confusion were pointed out by knowledgeable educators. But the editorial, I fear, reveals an attitude all too common in those outside the academic establishment.

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Kester, W. Carl, Letters to the Editor. A response to the editorial. McCloskey, Donald N., Letters to the Editor. A response to the editorial.

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